What shall we do with trouble?
What can trouble do for us?

March 27, 1938

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Jn. 16:33 In the world you have trouble. But Courage! I have ~~overcome~~ conquered the world.

INTRO. As we approach another commemoration of the sufferings and death of Jesus, we naturally trace the events that led to his crucifixion. In so doing this Lenten season I have been deeply impressed with the fact that Christ came into a world of trouble and that during his own life from cradle to cross he met with plenty of it and in the end became the victim of it. Trouble began at the birth of Jesus with the slaughter of the innocents, causing his parents to flee with him into Egypt. Trouble arose when Jesus opened his ministry of good deeds and gospel salvation. Trouble increased with his growing influence and popularity, climaxing on the cross. Not only did trouble arise externally but internally as well. Immediately after hi his baptism Jesus faced trouble within his own soul, being tempted as no man has ever been. He had plenty of trouble dealing with his own disciples and friends loved ones. God gave to the world one Son without sin but no son without trouble! Since trouble is the common experience of us all, it should help us to observe how Jesus dealt with it. Towards the last the Master said to his disciples (Jn. 16:33) "In the world you have trouble. Courage! I have overcome the world.

I. <u>The first thing to do with Trouble is to face it.</u>

1. Eliphaz, the Temite, says to Job, "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." Life is largely a testing, trying, tragic experience. Noone who amounts to anything at all ever escapes trouble. The man who plans his career without any consideration of possible trouble and with no preparation for dealing with it, is headed for the rocks. Be blind to trouble and trouble will gouge your eyes out.

2. We all hate trouble as we all dread death itself. I dont like it any better than you do. But it gets us nowhere, except into hot water, to ignore it. Most of us make the mistake of picturing the ideal life as serene and calm and all sinshine. We would eliminate all pain and suffering and trial. Many marriages fail

because the parties to the contract think only of happy bliss, prosperity and health, but do not take into consideration the possible adversity of sickness, want and sorrow. The trials of married life overcome them, their ideal of love and happiness is shattered, they become disillusioned and separate- because they started wrong, they failed to face trouble.

3. The happiness that comes from all sunshine and pleasure is but superficial and unsatisfying. They that seek it soon tire of it. True happiness is not to be found in mere pleasure, but in overcoming difficulties and hurdling obstacles. It is the hard difficult situations in life compelling us to strive and battle our way thru to victory that gives to us our lasting satisfactions and permanent joys. Even when heavy blows come such as fill our hearts with sorrow and grief, those who transcend and transmute them glow with a radiance of soul that no mere pleasure can create.

4. Jesus did not run away from his troubles, nor did he deny them or ignore them- he faced them and pepared his life for them like the true man that he was.

"I walked a mile with Pleasure.
She chattered all the way,
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she;
But,oh, the things I learned from her
When Sorrow walked with me!"

Robert Browning Hamilton.

II. God created man so as to be able to live in a world of trouble. God endowed man with a capacity to suffer, and for a good reason.

1. Man s capacity to suffer lifts him above the brute and is one of the outstanding marks of his noble nature. If God wanted to protect man from all pain and suffering he would have put the nerves of a man where his bones are and his bones on the outside where his skin is.

2. As a fact, the higher the scale of life the greater degree of sensitivity. So far as we know man is the highest form of creature living and among all animals of earth he is the most highly sensitized.

And we ought to thank God for it for without it we never would have been able to create anything. Because of it all that is sublime in art, poetry, literature and music has been brought forth. To a large degree man senses his way into the unknown mysteries of creation and in so doing discovers truth and reality. Our highly sensitive nature has made possible the development of our appreciations. Without it there could be no aesthetic sense, no evaluation of human love and friendship, virtue and goodness, no self-conscious communion with the eternal God.

3. Our sensitivity measures our capacity to suffer. Our forefathers used to say, "No pains, no gains." History teaches us that mankind made its most rapid progress upward, not in times of peace and plenty and security, but in times of distress and adversity. Before 1928 when prosperity was at its height who gave any thought to the economic order? But when we developed a pain in our economic sawdust a wave of heart-searching thinking economic thinking swept the country. Only when something hurts us do we begin to think seriously. It is trouble that teaches us life's great lessons, not prosperity and pleasure. No wonder Robert Browning wrote-

"Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge
the throe!"

III. But how about the cruel injustice of life?

1. Many persons ask, Why are the innocent made to suffer with the guilty? Why is'nt the good always rewarded and the bad always punished? Why ravishing floods, why decimating diseases, why earthquakes and volcanoes and cyclones typhoons and hurricanes and tidal waves? I dont know any more than you do the whyfore of these things. I do know that man's inhumanity to man is accountable for much of our unnecessary suffering. And I surmise that our present sense of justice has not yet reached the level of the divine sense of justice. We see as yet only in a glass darkly.

2. But this I do know-

a. The universe is under law, and it makes no difference whether one be good or bad, he is subject to it. No man, good or bad, can place his hand in the fire and not have it burned.

A few weeks ago I heard a commotion in the kitchen. My wife lifted a hot dish from the oven and dropt it in a hurry. She did'nt curse God for having let her get burned. Nor did I throw the stove out of house. A right use of the stove cooks our meals, a wrong use of it burns us. It is the same with the universe, with life- it all depends on how we adjust ourselves to them as to whether they feed us or burn us.

b. I also know that man has fought his way up from primitive savagery, thru tribalism into the nations of modern civilization-at a terrible cost it is true, but so has he done because only so could he do and get there.

c. I further know that the universe is one, that all ~~things~~ things work interdependently so that what happens to one affects all. Jesus himself tells us in the parable of the wheat and the tares that in this world of trouble the good and the bad are mixed together, are interdependent, and cannot now be separated.

d. And I also know that man is endowed with free will and initiative. He has the power to choose the wrong as well as choose the right. He can shrivel his soul into worse than nothingness or he can make himself a great soul. He can be selfish and self-centered or he can be generous and considerate of others. He can curse God and die, or obey God and live. He can let

life crush him or make him.

Like it or not, such is the universe, such is life Whatever youmay call it, just or unjust, life after all is a challenge, a great adventure, and the victory is to the strong-they who endure unto the end. This life of trouble kills little people but makes great ones. As Spurgeon put it-"There are no crown-wearers in heaven that were not cross-bearers here below."

IV. Trouble, then, should be regarded as a trust, not a curse

1. We naturally hold a high position, a vast fortune, or a great talent as a trust. Why not hold our troubles as a trust and make the most of them? Whining about them or cursing them gets us nowhere except to the bad.

Helen Keller at first rebelled against her blindness, but when she took it in trust as her opportunity, what happened? She developed a power of sight far greater than that of the average person with good eyesight. She learned to see comprehensively thru her mind's eye and converted her other four physical senses into eyes that could see about as well as normal ones.

2. We acknowledge Christ to be our Master Teacher. We can learn from Him this very lesson of trust. Jesus used his troubles for the accomplishing of his life-purpose. He made trouble the most transforming spiritual power in the world. Trouble nailed him to a cross to bury him in ignominy and disgrace- but this trouble gave Jesus his great opportunity-"I, if I be lifted up, shall draw all men unto me."

Stop hating your enemy-Trouble. Love your enemy, transform him into opportunity and advantage! even as Jesus did!'

V. When troubles are handled aright, as Jesus handled them, they draw us nearer to God, they strengthen us in our faith, they lift us to the levels of the heroic.

1. But when troubles are mishandled and misunderstood they often crush our faith, turn us away from God. When God took my mother who was also my best friend, my pal, I well remember how I turned against him- I cursed him with all the hatred of my soul, then I denied him and cast him out of my life. But not for long, for when I returned to my senses I clearly saw that all I had done was to add fuel to the fire of my troubles, tht I was hurtingmyself, not God.

Sad it is to meet with a Christian believer who forsakes his Christ and his God because of some trouble that has come to hurt him. All he has to do is to look at the New Testament to see and understand the meaning of trouble. Its central teaching is faith in God thru Jesus Christ, and yet its background is tragedy. As the ApostlePaul puts it, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

Look what they did to this same Paul-they stoned him, they put on him intorerable burdens, they drove him from one place to another, they threw him into prison and bound him in chains, and yet hear him exclaim, "Rejoice in the L Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice!"

Look at the very heart and center of Christian faith Jesus Christ, how he bore the griefs and sorrows of his followers, how extremely sensitive he was to have been touched with the feelings of all our infirmities. See him tread his sorrowful way to Golgotha, alone and forsaken by his disciples and friends. Behold him with all the serenity of his heroic soul willingly submit to his suffering and death on the cross. Travail and trouble with all its hatred and bigotry and cruelty let loose at once in a single concerted attack upon the one and only one whom the world calls good, and yet out of it all the there is born a new faith, a new hope, a new goal for all humanity thruout all the ages to strive for! The very heart of God's goodness and love thrown wide open for all to enter in who will!

Shall we of today let trouble weaken our faith and put distance between us and God? Back to the N.T. world view of life- daring to face ~~it~~ the world as it really is and yet thru faith and hope and love lifting us above it, enabling us to conquer it and at the same time helping God to transform it into ~~His~~ the kingdom of His righteousness, not ours, of His goodness, not ours, of His justice, not ours, of His mercy, not ours, of His infinite love, not ours.

Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you, for God is a very present help in time of trouble.

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